



Southwark Travel Assistance Policy

April 2017

Southwark School Travel Assistance Policy

Policy Statement

Southwark Council is committed to making sure that children and young people have access to transport and travel arrangements that promote their independence and wellbeing, as well as maximising benefits for the environment.

Most children and young people living in Southwark do not receive or require travel assistance to get from home to school or their place of learning. As a general rule, Southwark Council believes that the majority of children and young people will be able to travel on free public bus transport. It is recognised however, that not all children and young people can manage public transport, even with support.

Southwark Council has developed this single transport policy that describes for those in need of support, the eligibility criteria for assistance, how parents/carers/young people may apply, how decisions are made, the types of travel arrangements available, and how parents/carers/young people may appeal against decisions that they are unhappy with.

Specifically for young people of sixth form age (or up to 25 for those with learning difficulties and/or disability), this policy sets out the arrangements in place for the provision of financial assistance to help facilitate attendance at a place of learning.

Where a child meets the criteria for travel assistance, or where a young person is deemed in need of assistance, Southwark Council will seek to put in place the most appropriate, sustainable and cost-effective arrangements. This single policy will ensure that the Council takes a consistent approach to providing assistance.

The Council is committed to reducing traffic congestion, improving road safety and reducing the environmental impact of vehicle journeys by promoting the use of alternative forms of travel, such as walking, cycling and use of integrated public transport. In this regard, the Council has adopted the principles contained in its Sustainable Modes of Travel Strategy and works closely with schools to develop School Travel Plans that help to achieve this aim.

The policy was developed using a joint approach with key partners: parents/carers; schools/colleges; disability groups; sustainable travel; travel safety officers and Transport for London. It has also had full regard to the Department of Education's *Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance (July 2014)*, and their *Post-16 Transport to Education and Training (February 2014)* – (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance>) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-transport-to-education-and-training>)

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1. Introduction

Parents/carers are responsible for making sure their child attends school. This includes arranging any necessary travel arrangements to and from school and/or accompanying their child as necessary.

In most cases the council expects children and young people to use Transport for London's (TfL's) free London bus scheme to get to their school/place of learning.

Passes can be obtained by:

- a. Visiting and downloading an application form from www.tfl.gov.uk, or;
- b. Calling into any Underground station or ticket retailer for an application form

Having an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) does not necessarily mean that that individual will receive travel assistance. The council will generally aim to enable children to walk or use public transport independently by the age of 16, or earlier if possible.

When looking at applications for travel assistance, the council will have regard to the religious and philosophical beliefs of those applying.

Southwark's Travel Assistance Policy will be reviewed annually.

2. Who this policy is for

This single policy is for eligible children and young people in the following groups:

- a. Children under compulsory school age living in Southwark (refer to **Section 3**)
- b. Children aged 5 to 16 living in Southwark (refer to **Section 4**)
- c. Children who are *Looked After* by the council but not necessarily living in Southwark (refer to **Section 5**)
- d. Young people aged 16 to 19 in full-time education, without learning difficulties and/or disability, living in Southwark (refer to **Section 6**)
- e. Young people aged 16 or over, but under 25, with learning difficulties and/or disability, living in Southwark (refer to **Section 7**)

3. Travel assistance for children under compulsory school age

There is no legal requirement for the council to provide travel assistance to and from school/nursery for children **under compulsory school age**. The council expects parents/carers to take the child to school/nursery.

In exceptional circumstances, the council may consider travel assistance applications for children who are under compulsory school age. Each application will be considered and decided on its own merits. As an example, the council may decide that a child should receive travel assistance if they fall within the categories below. These categories are not exhaustive and where possible the council will signpost to alternative more appropriate provision.

- a. A child with special educational needs, long term medical needs or disability, either:
 - i. Attending school/nursery and living within two miles from home to school/nursery and who (taking account of their special educational needs, long term medical needs or disability) cannot be expected to walk to school/nursery accompanied by their parent/carer, or;
 - ii. A child attending school/nursery living over two miles distance from home to school/nursery for whom the council has not made suitable alternative arrangements for them to be placed nearer to their home.

For an application form, please refer to Section 14.

4. Travel assistance for children of compulsory school age

For eligible children of compulsory school age attending a qualifying school, the council has a legal duty to make arrangements for travelling from home to school for the purposes of accessing their education.

The council looks at applications for travel assistance against what are called eligibility criteria. The Government gives these criteria to local authorities. They are set in law.

Under exceptional circumstances the council will consider applications for travel assistance from those who do not fit the eligibility criteria. Under these circumstances, each application will be considered on its own merits. Examples of exceptional circumstances could include a child who has been temporarily moved out of home due to violence or eviction or a child who is in their final year of primary or secondary school and who has moved house. These examples are not exhaustive.

A child will be considered an “eligible child” if they fall within one of the following criteria:

- a. A child with special educational needs, a disability or mobility problem, either:
 - i. Attending school within statutory walking distance from home¹ ; where no suitable arrangements have been made by the Council for them to attend a school nearer home; and who (taking account of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem) cannot be expected to walk to school; or
 - ii. Attending provision *other than at school*, and who (taking account of their special educational needs, disability or mobility problem) cannot be expected to walk to that provision
- b. A child attending school within statutory walking distance from home ;who cannot be expected to walk because of the nature of the routes they could reasonably be expected to take to walk to school and where no suitable arrangements have been made by the council for them to attend a school nearer home.

¹ Beyond two miles for those under aged eight, or beyond three miles for those aged eight or over. The distance is measured using Walkit.com

- c. A child attending provision other than school, who cannot be expected to walk because of the nature of the routes they could reasonably be expected to take to walk to that provision.
- d. A child attending school or alternative provision further than statutory walking distance from home, for whom the council has not made suitable alternative arrangements for boarding accommodation or a place at a school nearer to their home;
- e. A child who is excluded, but still on the roll of a school, and required to attend a place outside of that school's premises and that place is further statutory walking distance from home, and for whom the council has not made suitable alternative arrangements for boarding accommodation or a place at a school nearer to their home;
- f. A child over eight years but under 11 from a family that is in receipt of maximum working tax credits, or eligible for free school meals, living more than two miles from their school, and for whom the council has not arranged a place at a school nearer to their home;
- g. A child over eight years but under 11 from a family that is in receipt of maximum working tax credits, or eligible for free school meals, attending provision other than at school and living more than two miles from that provision;
- h. A child over 11 but under school leaving age from a family that is in receipt of maximum working tax credits, or eligible for free school meals, living between two and six miles from their school, and where there are not three or more suitable schools nearer to his/her home;
- i. A child over 11 but under school leaving age from a family that is in receipt of maximum working tax credits, or eligible for free school meals, living between two and 15 miles from a school preferred by their parent because of their religion/belief, and where, having regard to that religion/belief, there is no other suitable school nearer to his/her home, and;
- j. A child over 11 but under school leaving age from a family that is in receipt of maximum working tax credits, or eligible for free school meals, attending provision other than at school and living more than two miles, but more than six miles, from that provision.

For an application form, please refer to Section 14.

5. Travel assistance for children who are *Looked After* by Southwark Council but not necessarily living in Southwark

For looked after children with an EHCP or a Statement of SEN, who are placed out-of-authority, the providing authority, where the child is ordinarily resident, is responsible for assessing the transport needs for the child. If transport is agreed by that authority, the local authority to which the child belongs must pay to the providing authority such amounts as agreed between them. Payments are made in line with the Inter-Authority Recoupment Regulations.

6. Travel assistance for young people aged 16-19 without special educational needs/disability

The council has a duty to specify the arrangements in place for assisted travel to facilitate the attendance of young adults of sixth form age receiving education or training at a place of learning. This Section and Section 7 describe what those arrangements are.

In most circumstances, the council expects the young person to make their own arrangements to travel to and from their place of learning independently.

This section describes the arrangements for the provision of transport assistance to a place of learning or training for young people not of compulsory school age up to the age of 19 (or over 19 if continuing a course that was started before their 19th birthday), who live within Southwark and who are in need of support.

1. 16+ Zip Oyster Photocard

Young people aged 16 or 17 on 31 August who live in a London borough can get free bus and tram travel. Londoners aged 18 on 31 August who are still in full time education can also apply for a 16+ Zip Oyster photocard that gives free bus and tram travel.

For details of how to apply, please visit:

<https://tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/travel-for-under-18s/zip-oyster-photocards>

2. Support for young people who need financial assistance to help them stay in education and training after age 16.

Young people in this category can apply to their school, college or training provider for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. The fund has two elements, both of which can help towards travel costs.

- a. **Vulnerable Student Bursary:** those most in need will be eligible for a bursary each year. To qualify students must meet at least one of the following criteria.
 - In or recently left local authority care

- Eligible for Income Support or Universal Credit
- Disabled and get both Employment and Support Allowance and either Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment

b. **Discretionary bursary:** providers may use their discretion to distribute any remaining funds to young people in ways that best fit the needs and circumstances of their students

For details on how to apply, please refer to Section 14.

3. Support for young people who are parents

The Care to Learn scheme is available for young parents in England. They can provide support for additional travel costs the learner has to pay while in education so that they can take their child from home to the childcare provider. Costs will be paid to the young person's learning or training provider regularly and the provider will reimburse the learner or arrange travel for them.

For details on how to apply, please refer to Section 14.

7. Travel assistance for young people aged 16 or over, but under 25, with special educational needs/disability

For young people with an EHCP or a Statement of SEN, who move from schools to places of learning at age 16, and who were given travel assistance until the end of their school studies, they will have their travel needs re-assessed at the point they re-apply for assistance (this includes those whose statements have ceased and who remain in full time education).

Assistance will not be restricted to those young people who had been assessed as having a particular travel need prior to the age of 16. If a travel need arises post 16, while the young person is in full time education, an application for assistance can be put to the council for consideration. The Travel Assistance Team will take an initial look at the application. Assistance will not be restricted to those young people who had been assessed as having a particular travel need prior to the age of 16. If a travel need arises post 16, while the young person is in full time education, an application for assistance can be put to the council for consideration. The Travel Assistance Team will assess the application. In some circumstances, additional information may be sought from the Adult Social Care Team for further consideration.

Each application for assistance will be considered on its own merit. In most cases, young people are expected to progress towards more independent travel. The council will look for ways to facilitate this through the provision of Independent Travel Training or by signposting elsewhere for available support and information.

When considering an application for travel assistance the council will have regard, but not be restricted to:

- i. The needs of those who could not access education or training provision if no arrangements were made;
- ii. The need to ensure that young people have reasonable opportunities to choose between different places of learning at which education and training is provided;
- iii. The distance from the young person's home to the place of learning;

- iv. The journey time to access different places of learning;
- v. The cost of transport to the place of learning;
- vi. Preferences based on religion.

When deciding whether a place of learning was chosen on reasonable grounds, the council will look at whether it made sense for the young person to choose a place of learning that was not the closest to where they live. For example, the course chosen was not available closer to home, or the establishment was preferred on grounds of religion and philosophical belief.

While this is not currently in operation, Southwark Council does reserve the right to introduce a process for asking those aged between 16 to 25, and their parents, for a reasonable contribution towards transport costs.

For an application form, please refer to Section 14.

8. Types of travel assistance available

Wherever possible, the council will choose a travel option that improves the physical well being and independence of those who use them and/or the environmental well being of the borough.

As a general guide, the council will look to make arrangements where the maximum journey time each way from home to school should not exceed 45 minutes for children under eight, and 75 minutes for those aged eight or above. Assistance will only be provided at the start and end of the school day.

- a. **Independent Travel Training:** Independent Travel Training will help the child/young person to either walk, cycle or use public transport.
- b. **Freedom Pass:** For those living in London, over 18 years of age, and who have an eligible disability.
- c. **Travel Card:** A travel card can help an adult accompany a child/young person to school/place of learning on public transport.
- d. **Cycle loan scheme:** The cycle loan scheme is available for those aged 16 and over and who live and study in Southwark. For £10, a bike can be borrowed for a month. Included are a helmet, bike lock and high visibility vest.
- e. **Free cyclist training sessions:** The council offers training to beginners, or those wanting to get back on the road, as well as having specially adapted bikes available for training children/young people with SEND. They also recommend suitable cycle routes for children and young people.
- f. **Free children's scooter training:** The council offers training to children whose parents wish them to use a scooter to travel to school.
- g. **Parental Reimbursement:** Parents/carers may receive reimbursement (at the HMRC rate) for using their own vehicle to take an eligible child/young person to and from school or place of learning.
- h. **Personal Budget:** A Personal Budget is a sum of money allocated to an individual as a result of an assessment of their needs. The amount of money awarded is based on the 'eligible needs' the individual has at that time.

- i. **Vehicles:** Very occasionally, the council may transport children/young people in separate taxis or private hire vehicles. The decision to do this will be based on an assessment of needs.

9. The application process

Most applications for travel assistance are dealt with by the council's travel assistance team.

The process once the travel assistance team receives a completed application for travel assistance is outlined below.

a. Stage One

- When the travel assistance team receives an application for assistance, they will send an acknowledgement within three working days of receipt. This will be quicker if the application is submitted electronically.

b. Stage Two

- The travel assistance team will look at whether the child/young person should get travel assistance. They will do this by looking at the information given in the application against the eligibility criteria.
- The travel assistance team will write to the applicant with their decision. If they have decided that the child is not eligible for assistance, they will explain the reasons why.
- If travel assistance has been agreed, the travel assistance team will contact the parent/carer or young person about the type of travel assistance that will be given, and the date assistance will start. In making a decision about the type of assistance, the travel assistance team will need to gather more information from the parent/carer or young adult, the school and/or the child's/young adult's caseworker.
- We aim to complete stage two of the process within 20 days of acknowledging an application for assistance.

10. Reviewing the type of travel assistance offered

Periodically, the travel assistance team will review the type of assistance the child/young person is receiving. This will usually be scheduled at the end of each academic year. In some cases, the review may result in a withdrawal of assistance or a change in the type of assistance provided. Whenever possible, the travel assistance team will look toward progressing the child/young person towards more independent travel.

Eligibility for travel assistance will also be re-assessed when there is a significant change in circumstances, such as a change of home address or a change in the child's/young person's needs. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to notify the travel assistance team immediately of any changes that may affect the provision of travel assistance.

Any changes will be implemented from the beginning of the next school term, or sooner by mutual agreement.

11. Circumstances where Southwark Council will NOT normally provide travel assistance

- a. Parents/carers are responsible for making sure their child attends school. This includes arranging any necessary travel to and from school or accompanying their child as necessary. If a parent is working at the time their child travels to and from school, they are expected to make arrangements for someone else to accompany them.
- b. Parents are responsible for making sure their child/children attend/s school, even when the children attend different schools. Parents are expected as necessary to make suitable arrangements for someone else to take their child to school.
- c. Wherever possible parents/carers of children with SEND are expected to make arrangements for their child to attend school in the same way as parents/carers of children/young adults without a SEND.
- d. If it is the parent/carer's choice to send their child to a school that is further away from home than a nearer suitable school, the parent/carer is expected to arrange travel for the child and pay any associated costs.
- e. The travel assistance team only normally provides assistance to and from school or a place of learning at the start and end of the school's or place of learning day. The travel assistance team is not able to consider requests to transport children/young people to breakfast clubs, after-school clubs or school trips.

Following an appeal, the travel assistance team will not accept a further application for travel assistance for the same child unless there has been a material change in the child's circumstances.

12. How to appeal a travel assistance decision

(Please note that there is a different process for feeding back about the service the Travel Assistance Team have provided – refer to Section 13).

A decision can be appealed by completing and returning, to the travel assistance team within 20 working days of the decision, an appeal form. The form should be used to explain the reasons for disagreeing with the decision.

While the appeal process is open no new travel assistance will be given or no changes will be made to existing arrangements.

Appeal forms can be obtained by phoning 020 7525 5121. They can also be found on the council's website at:

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/2204/free_school_transport

Once the travel assistance team receives the appeal form, the following steps will be taken:

a. Stage one

- An acknowledgement letter will be sent within three working days.
- An officer will put together the information that the decision was based upon. The head of service will look at that information alongside the reasons for appeal.
- The head of service will write, with a decision, within 20 working days of receiving the appeal form. The decision will explain whether the appeal was upheld or not. If the appeal is upheld, they will explain how matters will be put right.

b. Stage two

- If unhappy with the head of service's decision, the travel assistance team must be written to within 20 working days, explaining the reasons for disagreeing with that decision. That letter will be acknowledged within three working days.

- An officer will put together all the information the original and stage one appeal decisions were based on. This information will be sent to an independent complaint handler.
- Within 40 working days of requesting a stage two appeal, the independent complaint handler's report will be issued explaining whether the appeal has been upheld or not. If the appeal is upheld, they will explain how matters will be put right.

c. Stage three

- If unhappy with the way the stage one and stage two appeals have been handled, a complaint can be put to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- This must be done within 12 months of becoming aware of the matters that gave cause to the complaint – in most cases this will be 12 months from the date of the original decision.
- The Local Government Ombudsman contact details are:
 - 0300 061 0614
 - www.lgo.org.uk

13. How to feedback about the service provided by Southwark Council

(Please note that requests to appeal a travel assistance decision follow a different process – refer to Section 12).

Whatever decision is made on a case, the travel assistance team wants to give the best possible level of customer service.

To feedback about the level of service provided by the team, whether it be positive or negative, the council wants to hear.

For example, the council wants to know about the level of service experienced around:

- The time taken for them to make a decision
- Whether they updated on progress
- Whether the communication was appropriate

Feedback about service should be put to the children's services complaint unit. Their contact details are:

- Children's Services Complaint Unit
PO Box 64529
London SE1P 5LX

Tel: 020 7525 3681

Email: sscomplaints@southwark.gov.uk

14. Further advice and information

a. Application form

- Applications can be completed and submitted online at http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200071/information_for_parents/1051/school_travel_assistance
- Hard copy application forms can be downloaded from http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/2204/free_school_transport

When following the links, please be aware that there is a separate application form for post aged 16.

- Completed hard copy application forms can emailed or posted to:
 - schooltransport@southwark.gov.uk
 - Travel Assistance Team
4th Floor, Hub 2
PO Box 64529
London, SE1P 5LX

b. Contact details

- **The Travel Assistance Team**

Telephone: 020 7525 5121

Email: schooltransport@southwark.gov.uk

- **Southwark Information Advice and Support Team (SIAST)**

SIAST are available if people want support to complete the application form. Their contact details are:

Telephone: 0207 525 3104

Email: SIAS@southwark.gov.uk

- **16 to 19 Bursary Fund**

www.ypla.gov.uk/learnerssupport/16-19

- **Care to Learn**

www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/overview

- **Southwark Councils Sustainable Modes of Transport Strategy**

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200107/transport_policy/2015/sustainable_modes_of_travel

c. Walking and cycling routes

- Recommended Southwark cycling routes (current and planned):

https://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/181/cycle_routes

- Recommended Southwark walking routes

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/10096/healthy_living/890/organised_group_walks_throughout_southwark

d. Places in Southwark that offer specialist and post-16 education

- Special schools

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/200226/special_educational_needs/1914/sen_schools

- Post-16

http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/200561/16_education_employment_and_training

15. Glossary

- **Aged 5 to 16:** pupils attending reception up to, and including, year 11.
- **Aged 16 to 19:** young people in year 12 and 13 (or equivalent) up to the age of 18 (or age 19 if continuing a course that was started before their 19th birthday).
- **Special educational need/disability:** refers to children who have learning difficulties or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same age.
- **Learning disability:** a general term that refers to individuals who find it harder to learn, understand and communicate.
- **Learning difficulty:** refers to individuals who have specific problems with learning as a result of either medical, emotional or language problems.
- **Independent travel training:** personalised training to teach a child/young person to travel to and from school or their place of learning.
- **Qualifying school:** A community foundation or voluntary aided or voluntary controlled school. A community or foundation special school. A school approved under section 342 of the Education Act 1996. A pupil referral unit. A city technology college, a city college for the technology of the arts, an Academy school or an alternative provision academy.
- **Nearest suitable school:** Taken to mean the nearest qualifying school with places available that provides education appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of the child, and any SEN that the child may have.

- **Home:** a child's 'home' is the place where he/she is habitually and normally resident.
- **Child Looked After:** A child is looked after by a local authority if he or she is in their care or is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by the authority. This is defined in law under the Children Act 1989.
- **Providing authority:** The authority maintaining the EHCP or Statement of SEN. Where a looked after child is in a settled placement with foster parents or in a children's home, then the authority where the foster parents are resident, or where the home is situated, will be the authority responsible for carrying out the SEN assessment and for making and maintaining an EHCP or Statement of SEN.
- **Placing authority:** The local authority responsible for placing the child.
- **Ordinarily resident:** Ordinary residence is established if there is a regular habitual mode of life in a particular place '*for the time being, whether of short or long duration*', the continuity of which has persisted apart from temporary or occasional absences. (House of Lords).

If a child is placed in either a 38 or 52 week residential education placement, their 'ordinary residence' is with the placing authority.

- **Child belongs:** The child belongs to the placing authority.
- **Appeal:** Someone appeals when they disagree with the way in which a decision was made. The reasons for appeal are looked at by someone in higher authority than the original decision maker. That person will decide whether the original decision should change or not.
- **Philosophical belief:** for a philosophical 'belief' to be worthy of protection, it must attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance; be worthy of respect in a democratic society; and not be incompatible with human dignity or the fundamental rights of the child. Examples of beliefs are humanism and atheism.
- **Road routes:** reference to road route should be taken to mean a route passable by a motor vehicle.
- **Place of learning for young adults of sixth form age:**
 - Schools;

- Any institution maintained or assisted by the authority which provides further education or higher education (or both);
- Any institution within the further education sector;
- Any establishment (which is not a school or an institution maintained or assisted by the authority) which is supported by the Learning and Skills Council for England.